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ABSTRACT

The undergraduate library is defined as a library unit, separately housed with services geared at the lower division undergraduate student on a university campus. Using this definition, there are ten undergraduate libraries in the United States: (1) Harvard University, (2) University of Michigan, (3) University of South Carolina, (4) Indiana University, (5) Cornell University, (6) University of Texas, (7) University of Illinois, (8) Stanford University, (9) University of North Carolina and (10) University of Nebraska. Each of these is an undergraduate library, yet each is different in areas ranging from the computerized complexities at Stanford to the elegant simplicity at South Carolina. Six basic ways the undergraduate library differs from the traditional university library are: (1) provides open access to the collection, (2) centralizes and simplifies services to the undergraduate, (3) provides selected books of value for liberal education as well as the reserved book collection, (4) attempts to make the library a tool for instruction in library use, (5) provides services additional to those given by the research collection and (6) constructs a building with the undergraduate's habits of use in mind. Each of the ten undergraduate libraries was discussed during the institute. (NH)

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THE UNDERGRADUATE LIBRARY - THE FIRST 20 YEARS

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The Undergraduate Library - The First 20 Years

by Irene Braden Hoadley

The development of the separately housed undergraduate library on the modern university campus is a recent innovation--so recent in fact that the number of libraries can still be readily counted. Because there are many definitions of an undergraduate library, for the purposes of this paper it will be defined as a library unit, separately housed and with services geared at the lower division undergraduate student on a university campus.

The separately housed undergraduate library differs from the traditional university library in six basic ways:

1) by providing open access to the collection to avoid the difficulties of the closed stack system,

2) by centralizing and simplifying services to the undergraduate,

3) by providing a collection of carefully selected books, containing the titles all undergraduates should be exposed to for their liberal education, as well as incorporating the reserved book collection,

4) by attempting to make the library an instructional tool by planning it as a center for instruction in library use, to prepare undergraduates for using larger collections and by staffing it with librarians interested in teaching the undergraduate the resources of a library and the means of tapping those resources,

5) by providing services additional to those given by the research collection,

6) by constructing a building with the undergraduate's habits of use in mind.

What caused this need for change in the concept of library service? Why were the traditional closed stacks and reserve book room no longer satisfactory? Until this century, most universities and their libraries were small, and more important they were largely undergraduate institutions. The increase of graduate education which resulted in larger and research oriented collections compounded the problems of the undergraduate in using the university library. Larger numbers of students also made the library difficult to use because it was crowded--study conditions were unsatisfactory and staff was insufficient to handle the volume of work. The undergraduate only had free access to reserve books which proved to be educationally stifling.

At the same time that university libraries were becoming more difficult for the undergraduate to use successfully, new teaching methods sent him to the library with greater frequency. Wider independent reading was being encouraged as teachers moved away from the traditional textbook/ reserved book reading pattern. Thus the undergraduate was trapped by this double development: increasing emphasis on the use of the library at a time when the library was becoming increasingly difficult to use.

The first response to this problem was the development of the undergraduate collection housed in the general university library. This trend began in the 1930's and many universities, up to the present time, have incorporated this plan in any one of its various forms. Most take the form of setting aside one or two floors of a new building or a renovated building for this purpose. Small institutions may only provide a large reading room. An undergraduate collection may be little more than a reserve collection for lower division students, it may be a browsing collection of light fiction, periodicals and non-course-related materials or it

may be a "learning center"--a relatively small collection of books, some of which relate to the curriculum and some of which are of general interest.

As demands for service increased, new approaches to the problem of library service to the undergraduate were sought. One answer (there are other approaches) was the separately housed undergraduate library. The undergraduate library will provide some solutions to the problems of servicing undergraduate students, but it is not the answer for all institutions faced with the same or similar problems. The undergraduate library, however, seems necessary only when the enrollment becomes too heterogeneous to be served in one building and by one staff. When the student body contains many undergraduates and a large percentage of graduate students in addition to a significant faculty group, the distinct service which the undergraduate library affords is a partial answer to the problem.

Another factor which affects the establishment of an undergraduate library is enrollment. The total enrollment is not as important as the percentage of undergraduate students. When graduate students constitute one-third to one-half of the student body, an undergraduate library is a feasible means to solving the problem of serving undergraduates.

The size of the main library collection also affects undergraduate service. When a collection surpasses one million volumes, some division of the library becomes desirable. Whether a vertical division as represented by undergraduate libraries or a horizontal one as reflected in the divisional plan is made depends on many factors.

The nature of the main library building--its physical layout and structure--helps determine the feasibility of a separate undergraduate

library building. If the main library building is one that can be adapted to meet the needs of the undergraduate as well as those of graduate students and faculty, there is no need for a separate undergraduate library. But, if the present building cannot be made to provide for the needs of the undergraduate for seating, access to books and service, another solution has to be found. Or, if the use to which it is being put makes the building unadaptable to the needs of the undergraduate, it is not desirable to attempt a renovation. The solution may be an undergraduate collection in a separate reading room in one wing of the building or on one floor of the building. It may be as simple as opening the stacks to the undergraduate. But, if the problem is basically one of not enough space for seating due to increasing enrollments, another answer usually has to be found.

Although some universities consider the idea of a separate undergraduate library desirable, they reject it because they think the cost of the operation is too high. The undergraduate library is costly in terms of duplication of staff and books but is cheap in terms of operation when compared with similar service in a general university library. It is more expensive than offering no special service for the undergraduate, but it is inexpensive in terms of supplying a needed service. The feasibility of building a separate undergraduate library varies with the situation at each institution. The size of the student body, the size of the book collection, the kind of service available for the undergraduate student, the building situation and the curriculum needs are all facets of the problem.

Using the definition previously stated, there are now ten undergraduate libraries in the United States which will be discussed. These are

at Harvard University, University of Michigan, University of South Carolina, Indiana University, Cornell University, University of Texas, University of Illinois, Stanford University, University of North Carolina and the University of Nebraska. Each of these is an undergraduate library yet each is different from the other in areas ranging from the computerized complexities at Stanford to the elegant simplicity at South Carolina with many variations between. Each of these libraries was designed and built to deal with particular problems. Each was built in an unique atmosphere which helped determine the ultimate character of the building and the services which it offers. Just as each of these libraries has both individualistic and common traits so will those undergraduate libraries of the future.

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